



Mid-Region Council of Governments

Spring 2003, Volume 1, Issue 2

## 2003 Legislative Session Tackled Issues and Produced Results

Many people are praising the 2003 Legislative session that ended March 22<sup>nd</sup> as one of the most productive sessions in recent memory. The Legislature and the Governor worked together to resolve long-standing issues such as tax relief, education reform, economic development, and public safety. In all, 687 bills made it through both the House and the Senate and were sent to the Governor for his approval.

MRCOG is very pleased with the Legislature's action on many of the issues we had identified as our legislative priorities. One of our most important objectives, enabling legislation for Regional Transit Districts, was signed into law on March 21st. The Regional Transit District Act, sponsored by **Representative Dan Silva** (Albuquerque) and **Senator Ben Altamirano** (Silver City), allows local governments to cooperate on the development and implementation of transit projects with a regional orientation. We can now look forward to making regional transit a reality in this part of New Mexico. MRCOG is grateful to these two legislators for sponsoring and supporting the RTA legislation.

Another important transit initiative eliminates the \$50,000 cap on State contributions to mass transit projects. That bill has also been signed by the Governor and allows the State to become a partner in the development and operation of alternative modes of transportation throughout the state.

Another top priority increases funding for county detention costs. Both the House and Senate passed the measure which was introduced by **Representative Nick Salazar** (San Juan Pueblo). HB 308 requires the State to reimburse counties for the costs of transporting and housing State prisoners. Unlike previous proposals, HB 308 mandates that the State reimburse those costs. The bill was signed by the Governor.

Several economic development bills received overwhelming support from the Legislature. Lawmakers supported funds for the State's Industrial Development Fund, a.k.a. "In-Plant Training" and expanded the ways in which those funds can be used. A special thanks is extended to **Senator Richard Romero** (Albuquerque) for securing capital outlay funds in the amount of \$90,000 towards a permanent home for MRCOG. ■

### EDA AWARDS PLANNING GRANTS IN NM



Lawrence Rael, MRCOG Executive Director, receives a check from the U.S. Commerce Assistant Secretary for Economic Development, Dr. David A. Sampson, for MRCOG's Economic Development District (EDA) planning grant. "This continues the Council of Governments' ability to provide support and technical assistance to local governments in our region," said Mr. Rael. MRCOG staff assists organizations in the region with economic development activities including development of EDA grant applications.

### A message from the MRCOG Chair ...



The 2003 Legislative session proved to be fruitful for the MRCOG. We could not have seen such tremendous benefits on the horizon for those we serve without the support of our Honorable Governor Bill Richardson and our dedicated legislators. They truly went the extra mile to assist on various MRCOG issues, and for that we thank them wholeheartedly. The primary agenda item for the MRCOG was the passage of legislation for Regional Transit Districts within the state, allowing communities to work together on their transportation needs. The Governor signed this important legislation in March.

I would also like to offer a very heartfelt note of thanks to Representative Dan Silva, Senator Ben Altamirano, and Senator Richard Romero for their unwavering diligence and support. Because of their efforts, and the efforts of so many others, the MRCOG is headed in a new direction - one that will take us and our constituents to new heights in working together to benefit our people and our communities.

A. Terese Ulivarri  
Chair, MRCOG Board of Directors

## MRCOG's **VIEWS**

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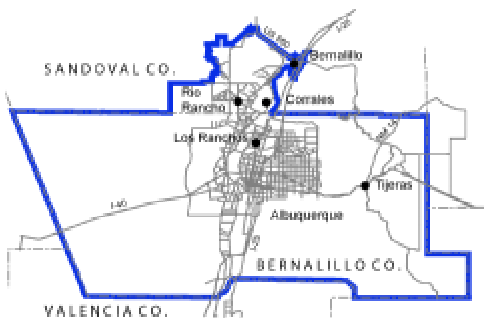
Lawrence Rael

## Did you know . . ?

Transportation planning for the future is critical. Projections for 2000 to 2025 for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA map below) show there will be:

- ➔ 243,000 more people, growing 39% to total 865,000
- ➔ 140,000 more jobs, rising 38% to total 507,000
- ➔ A concentration of New Mexico jobs in the metro area (currently 45% of all jobs in NM)
- ➔ A decreasing job to housing ratio in the AMPA, from 1.39 to 1.32
- ➔ A per capita increase in vehicle miles traveled daily, from 25.4 to 28.1
- ➔ A per capita increase in daily travel time, from 36 to 53 minutes

### Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area



## Transportation Planners Look to 2025 in New Plan for the Metropolitan Area

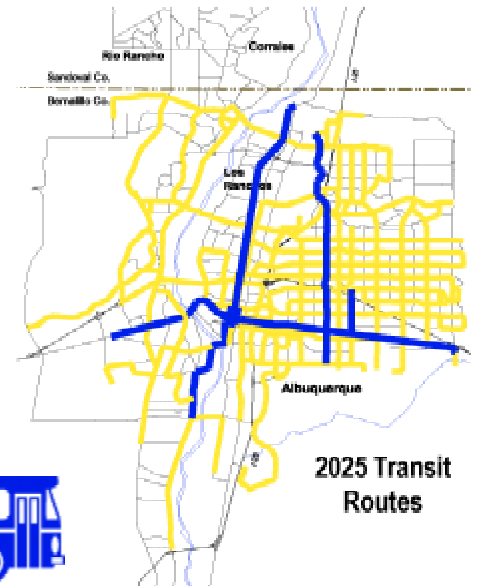
MRCOG is pleased to announce that the **2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan** for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area is now complete (see map below left). This Plan is the result of an in-depth deliberative, analysis-based approach to transportation planning which involved the use of a number of new technical applications as well as extensive participation from a variety of stakeholders.

As the metropolitan planning organization for the Planning Area, MRCOG is responsible under Federal law for developing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The plan is required to cover a 20-year period, to include a revenue-constrained financial plan, and to be updated every three years.

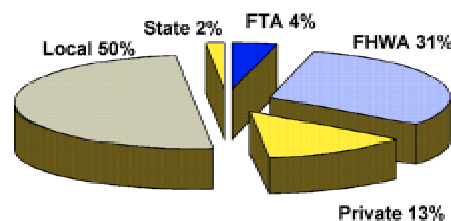
The Plan represents a set of activities that respond to the transportation concerns that are expected to accompany growth over the next 23 years (see sidebar statistics at left). These activities are the result of a highly constrained process, one which considered financial, environmental, and feasibility limitations.

The Plan includes:

- 228 new bikeway centerline miles, more than doubling the current network
- Increased transit frequency along 4 popular routes (map at left)
- A 12% increase in transit route miles
- An increasing share of funding from the private sector, which is expected to contribute 38% of the Plan budget in the 2016 to 2025 timeframe
- The expansion of ITS activities to provide on-time information to alleviate congestion
- Projects which enhance economic development opportunities
- An additional 329 roadway lane miles, an 11% increase to the current network
- Reconstruction to occur on 12% of the current network



### 2025 MTP Estimated Revenues (2003-2025) \$3.5 Million



While the technical environment of the plan was enhanced through use of the Land Use Model and the Accessibility Model, the Plan's overall approach to planning remained conservative. However, the Plan does discuss the current activities which may result in future changes to our approach to transportation planning. These include growth management initiatives, regional transit districts, high capacity transit, commuter rail, and managed lanes. The results of these activities will be key to developing action plans that can be implemented in the near future and incorporated into the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

For more information contact Loretta Tollefson at 247-1750 (ltollefson@mrcog-nm.org).

## Intelligent Transportation Systems

The MRCOG, in cooperation with several local governments and the New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department (NMSHTD), is engaged in a study to evaluate the deployment of Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) elements on the region's roadways and transit system.

The purpose of ITS technologies is to provide better information to those who use and operate the transportation system. Examples of ITS features include freeway and arterial management systems complete with real time access to video, traffic counts, signal controls, weather and other roadway conditions; driver information systems that provide real time information about congestion, accidents and roadway conditions; and traffic signal interconnects.



In the transit arena, ITS has been utilized to track buses in real time and information is then relayed to "smart bus stops" which inform riders of arrival times.

In Phoenix, Arizona, cameras located on the freeway system are monitored from a traffic control center. Cameras and detectors in the roadway



monitor performance of the system. Freeway speed data is fed to an internet map so that people can access the information before they travel. Information is also fed to variable message signs for drivers already on the road.

These are some examples of various technologies being considered in the MRCOG ITS Implementation Plan Study which is expected to be completed in Fall 2003. The goal of the study is to identify ITS projects in the region that show the most promise for providing cost effective solutions to many of our traffic problems. The study has already identified the proposed Albuquerque Freeway Management System as one of the top priorities. The System includes many of the same features that are part of Phoenix's freeway management system.

A well-managed ITS system increases the efficiency of the transportation system. This means the higher-cost investments of building additional roadways can often be deferred or eliminated. MRCOG has identified ITS as a key investment strategy for the near future in the 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

For more information on the ITS Implementation Plan Study contact Chris Blewett at 724-3634. ■

## MRCOG Assists with Regional Competitiveness Initiative

The Council on Competitiveness and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) are providing resources that will enable six regions nationwide to conduct Competitiveness Initiatives. The Central New Mexico region has been selected as one of those locations, and will be the first to start its Initiative.

The purpose of the Central New Mexico Competitiveness Initiative is to develop an innovation-based economy. The intent is not to "recreate the wheel", but to build upon on-going regional economic development initiatives such as the Next Generation Economy Initiative's industrial clusters. The Initiative will begin with an inventory and evaluation of the region's innovation assets and economic strengths and weaknesses. The approach will be to collect data through surveys and interviews, to hold a regional summit, and then to develop a strategic action plan.

*"Perhaps the Mid-Region Council of Governments could provide a platform on which some real regional coordination and cooperation could take place in the middle Rio Grande Valley" — Governor Bill Richardson*

A primary objective will be to catalyze consensus among regional leaders on priorities and policies for strengthening regional innovation. The MRCOG will play an important role by involving the region's local elected officials in the process. As Governor Bill Richardson directed at a recent National Association of Industrial and Office Properties meeting, "When Lawrence Rael and the COG reach out for help on this project, get involved".

The Central New Mexico Competitiveness Initiative will also provide the region with an opportunity to place central New Mexico on the national radar screen. The membership of the Council of Competitiveness includes CEOs from the Fortune 500 businesses. "When these CEOs make business decisions, such as where to locate their companies, we want them thinking of central New Mexico", says MRCOG Executive Director Lawrence Rael.

### Monies Awarded for Water, Sewer, and Storm Drainage Projects

In January, Governor Bill Richardson appointed new members to the New Mexico Community Development Council (CDC). Debbie Hays, Sandoval County Manager, was appointed to represent District 3 (Bernalillo, Sandoval, Tarrant, and Valencia Counties).

The first action taken by the newly-appointed CDC was to allocate the Year 2003 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Bernalillo County and the City of Moriarty received "high" application ratings, and were awarded the maximum amount possible, \$500,000 each.

The Bernalillo County project consists of water, sanitary sewer, and pavement improvements in the Coors Boulevard/Bridge Boulevard area in the South Valley. The Moriarty project is phase three of a storm drainage system in the City's original townsite area east of NM 41.

MRCOG assists CDBG grantees in the environmental review of their projects by commenting on the impacts of the project on land development, commercial facilities, and demographic character.

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## Development of Regional Water Plan Progressing



*An empty Jemez Canyon Reservoir as viewed in December 2002. (Photo by B. Ives.)*

The MRCOG Water Resources Board, in conjunction with the Water Assembly, continues to develop the Middle Rio Grande Regional Water Plan. The most recent series of Community Conversations and a Regional Forum were held in March 2003 by the Water Assembly. The meetings provided an explanation of the in-depth analysis conducted on forty-four alternative actions and the feasibility of these potential actions. Participants at the March functions, held in each county, had the opportunity to earmark those alternatives that they believe were either most favorable or least preferred as part of the regional water plan.

The Water Assembly is now looking at grouping alternative actions based on specific areas of interest which will take into account water savings, water demand reduction, cost, and implementation time. These various groupings will then be discussed at the sixth series of Community Conversations in late April and early May in order to help build a “balanced scenario” that will be considered as a major component of the Regional Water Plan.

The MRCOG Water Resources Board will become actively engaged in evaluating the various group scenarios and ultimately in assisting in the formulation of a preferred scenario for the final regional water plan. The Plan is expected to be completed for submittal to the Interstate Stream Commission in early December.

**MRCOG's VIEWS**

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